

MANHAJ FĪ TALAB AL-‘ILM

SECOND EDITION



INTRODUCTION BY:

AL-SHAYKH
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حفظه الله

ABU NUSAYBAH

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

My dear brother ‘Ustādh Abu Nusaybah sent me a booklet entitled, “*Manhaj Fi Talab Al-‘Ilm*” in order that I may review it and write an introduction for it on his behalf, and during this process he patiently waited while I fulfilled many other obligations which I had, before getting back to him, may Allāh reward him.

After reading the booklet I found that he covered the Manhaj (methodology) that a Talab Al-‘Ilm should undertake on his path to attaining Islāmic Knowledge, the Hukm (ruling) of seeking Islāmic knowledge in Islām, the important Qawā’id (principles) that a Talab Al-‘Ilm should pay attention to before beginning - and also during his journey in the path of seeking Shari’i ‘Ilm.

Whilst reviewing the text I also found it to be a very summarized text which is eloquent, well organized, and direct in pointing out the important issues of the subject.

I would like to recommend for Tulāb Al-‘Ilm (students of Islāmic knowledge) who are in the process of beginning their journey in seeking knowledge to read this booklet, and to also continue reading it throughout their journey - as it contains valuable points that a Tālib must be reminded of.

I ask Allāh that this work be only for His sake, and that He Ta’ālā rewards the author. I would like to take the opportunity to also say a few words regarding ‘Ustādh Abu Nusaybah. Approximately ten years ago when I was first released from prison and I was receiving hundreds of emails from various people congratulating me on my release, one particular email stood out due to its lengthy yet naturally eloquent and organized content, of which even today – nearly 10 years later – I still remember where and when I read it, and I can envision its details as if it was in front of me. It was an email which was full of ‘Adab and eagerness to learn – amongst other qualities – so I chose to respond to it, and I thank Allāh for that decision.

And from that day of responding to his email, until today, we have been in constant contact with the exception of some intervals due to trials that either me or him were facing (and I ask Allāh Ta’ālā to grant us ‘Istiḳāmah and Thabāt in our trails and Deen), and through those years I have seen him excel drastically in Talab Al-‘Ilm, and I have found him to be eager in increasing his studies and being active in Da’wah, whilst having concern for the affairs of the ‘Ummah, and I have found him to be of good ‘Adab, respectful, humble in nature, along with other good qualities that Allāh has blessed him with, which penetrate the heart and cause me to love him.

And I ask Allāh that he be from amongst those whose names are announced in the heavens with the declaration:

"When Allāh loves a slave, calls out Jibrīl and says: 'I love so-and-so; so love him'. Then Jibrīl loves him. After that he (Jibrīl) announces to the inhabitants of heavens that Allāh loves so- and-so; so love him; and the inhabitants of the heavens (the angels) also love him and then make people on earth love him." (Refer to Hadith in Bukhāri and Muslim on the subject)

He has also chosen to surround himself with the close company of some of the dearest brothers to me. Brothers who I have met way before even meeting him, and they are among the most well-mannered, and eager to learn brothers I have had the pleasure of meeting - men whose companionship reminds one of the times you now only read about in the books. And only Allāh knows what is in the heart.

Abu Dardā' رضي الله عنه said,

"From the Fiqh of man is the companionship he chooses to be near to him."

And a poet named 'Adi ibn Zayd al-'Ibādi from the times of Jāhiliyyah (before the coming of Prophethood of Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم) said:

عَنِ الْمَرْءِ لَا تَسْأَلْ وَسَلْ عَنْ قَرِينِهِ فَكُلُّ قَرِينٍ بِاِمْقَارٍ يَقْتَدِي

"Do not ask about a man, but rather ask about the close companionship that he keeps, for every person will follow and imitate his close companions."

Abu Nusaybah refers to me as his Shaykh, and among the biggest blessing is to have a dutiful student, as it was said by Imām Muhammad Ibn 'Idrees Shafi'i, that Imām Al-Layth Ibn Sa'd is more knowledgeable than Imām Mālik Ibn Anas, except his students let him down - and I know 'Ustādh Abu Nusaybah to be a dutiful student. I remember him telling me how he used to circulate my "Heroes of Islām" series on CD, ten years before we had even met. That makes me appreciate the special bond we have had for twenty years, the ten year bond being before we even met. In fact I can say that the closeness of my bond with him is a bond I don't have with many others, hence why I say; if it was possible for non relatives to inherit from each other due to how close they have become, then 'Ustādh Abu Nusaybah حفظه الله would certainly inherit from me the portion of a biological son.

I say he is one student that any Shaykh would be honored to have studying with him, and I ask Allāh to grant him success in his search for Knowledge, his Da'wah, and to make him an Imām of the Muslimīn, and that He make him a Sadaqah Jāriyah for me and my parents the day I enter and lay in my grave.

This is only what I have seen from him, and only Allāh, Al-'Alīm, Al-Khabīr knows the true reality of the hearts and souls of people.

Ahmad Musā Jibrīl



YOU SHOULD KNOW, MAY ALLAH HAVE MERCY UPON YOU

That seeking *Shar'i* Ilm (Islamic knowledge) is *Wajib* (obligatory) upon every Muslim, as indicated by the Qura'nic Ayah:

"So know that, La ila ha illa lla h (none has the right to be worshipped in truth but Allah)"¹

And Indeed, the servant of Allah ta'aalaa will not be able to worship Him properly, upon *Basirah* (knowledge & Insight) with regards to his *Aqeedah* (beliefs), *Ibaadat* (acts of worship), *Mu'aamalaat* (social, financial & other forms of interpersonal transactions), *Khuluq* (morals) & *Adaab* (manners) – without learning Islamic knowledge from the *Wahi* (Divine revelation in Al-Quran and Sunnah), as Allah ta'alaa says:

"And thus We have sent to you (O Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم) Ruh (a Revelation, and a Mercy) of Our Command. You knew not what is the Book, nor what is Imaan! But We have made it (this Qur'an) a light wherewith We guide whosoever of Our slaves We will" ²

So, it is obligatory upon the servant to learn and have *Shar'i* knowledge from the Quran and/or Sunnah before engaging in an act of *Ibaadah* (worship), whether this act is related to Beliefs of the heart, Speech of the tongue, or an Action of the limbs – hence Imaam al-Bukhari (256 A.H) said:

"Chapter: Knowledge before speaking and performing actions, and the evidence is a statement of Allah ta'aala "So Know, verily Laa Illah Illa-Allah" (Quran 47: 19) so Allah began with knowledge before the sayings and actions" ³

¹ (Al-Quran 47: 19)

² (Al-Quran 42: 52)

³ Bukhari, Chapter of Knowledge



SECTION: LEARNING THE ETIQUETTES OF SEEKING, BEFORE SEEKING KNOWLEDGE

You should know may Allah have mercy upon you, that whoever seeks to build a thing without first solidifying its foundations properly – is likely to be prevented from achieving his goals, hence the scholars say:

"Whoever does not perfect the Usool (Foundations/Fundamentals) is prevented from reaching the Wusool (fruits/goals/objectives)"⁴

So, it is appropriate for the *Talib* (student) to learn and correct his *Manhaj* (methodology) of Seeking *Shar'i* Ilm, before engaging in seeking it seriously. Such was the way and guidance of the Salaf us-Salih (*Sahabah-Tabi'een & Atbaa' al-Tabi'een*).

Imaam Malik Ibn Anas (179 A.H) said:

"Learn Aadaab (good etiquettes/manners) before beginning your Seeking of Islamic Knowledge"⁵

Imaam Abdullah Ibn Mubarak (181 A.H) said:

"I sought after Adab for 30 years and I sought knowledge for 20 years. The Salaf would seek manners and then they would seek Shari knowledge"⁶

⁴ Tadhkirah Sami wa Al-Muttakalam Fi Adaab Alim wa Muta'alim

⁵ Gharaaib Imaam Malik Ibn Anas

⁶ Ghayah An-Nihayah



SECTION: THE DEFINITION OF 'AL-ILIM' LINGUISTICALLY, AND BY WAY OF THE SHARI'A

LINGUISTICALLY:

"Al-Ilm is opposite of Jahl (ignorance), it is to know something as it really is in reality, with certainty"

SHARI'A:

"Al-Ilm is understanding the Deen of Al-Islam and its Uloom (sciences), along with its evidences from the Quran and Sunnah, as understood by the Salaf us Salih"

Imaam Abdur-Rahman Awzaa'ee (206 A.H) said:

"Al-Ilm is what the Sahabah of the Messenger Muhammad (ﷺ) came with, and anything other than that is not considered Knowledge" ⁷

⁷ Fadl Ilm as-Salaf Alaa Khalaf



SECTION: THE HUKM (RULING) OF SEEKING ISLAMIC KNOWLEDGE

You should know may Allah have mercy upon you, verily the obligation of seeking *Shar'i* knowledge is divided into two types, according to the Ulamaa of Islam, **1) Fard Ayn** and **2) Fard Kifayaah**:

Imaam Ibn Abdul Barr (463 A.H) said:

*"The Uleema have Ijmaa (consensus) that there is from Al-Ilm that which is Fard Ayn (Individual Obligation) and that which is Fard Kifaayah (Communal Obligation) ..."*⁸

1. FARD AYN (INDIVIDUAL OBLIGATION)

This type of Ilm is obligatory upon every single Muslim to learn, no one is excused with negligence in this form of knowledge, and The Ulamaa have further divided this type of knowledge into **three types**:

(a) Fard Ayn 'Aamma (General Individual Obligation)

This type of Ilm is obligatory upon all Muslimeen in general to learn, no one is excused with negligence in this form of knowledge, this type of Ilm includes general *Aqeedah* (Tawheed of Allah ta'aala, *Risaalah* of the Prophet (ﷺ), *Taharah*, *Salaah*, *Saum*, and basic knowledge matters of Halal and Haram like the prohibition of *Zina*, Alcohol, Murder, Stealing etc. It is reported that the Prophet (ﷺ) said:

*"So know that, La ilaha illallah (none has the right to be worshipped in truth but Allah)"*⁹

⁸ Jaami Bayaan al-Ilmi wa Fadlihi

⁹ (Al-Quran 47: 19)



(b) Fard Ayn Khasaa (Specific Individual Obligation)

This type of Ilim is ordinarily *Mandoub* (recommended) to learn, but becomes obligatory upon specific types *Muslimeen* in certain circumstances. For example, the Ilim of *Zakat* is *Wajib* upon those whose wealth reaches *Nisaab*, Ilim of *Hajj* is *Wajib* upon those going to fulfil *Hajj*, Ilim of *Nikah* is *Wajib* upon those intending to marry, and likewise Ilim of *Tijaarah* is *Wajib* upon those who intend on running a business, etc.

Imaam Fudayl Ibn Iyaadh (187 A.H) said:

"Every action which is Fard (obligatory) upon you to perform, then seeking Shari knowledge regarding its rulings also becomes obligatory upon you, and what is not obligatory upon you to perform, then knowing its rulings is not obligatory upon you to know too" ¹⁰

(c) Fard Ayn fil Nawaazil (Obligation in Crisis)

This type of Ilim becomes obligatory upon a Muslim when he is faced with a test or a crisis and he doesn't know the *Hukm* and the methodology of dealing with it Islamically.

Allah ta'aala says:

"When there comes to them some matter touching (public) safety or fear, they make it known (among the people); if only they had referred it to the Messenger or to those charged with authority among them, the proper investigators would have understood it from them (directly)" ¹¹

¹⁰ Tafsir Qurtubi

¹¹ (Quran 4:83)



2. FARD KIFAAYAH (COMMUNAL OBLIGATION)

This type of Ilim is obligatory upon the Muslim Ummah to seek in general. If some people from the Ummah are engaged in learning it, then the obligation is lifted from the rest of the Ummah and it becomes *Mandoub* for them. If, however, they all collectively neglect learning it, then they are thereby collectively sinful – until a sufficient number of them learn said type of Ilim.

This type of knowledge encompasses subjects like *Uloom Qur'an* (Sciences of Quran), *Nahw* (Sciences of Arabic Grammar), *Mustalah Hadeeth* (Sciences of Hadeeth), *Usool al-Fiqh* (Sciences of Foundations of Islamic Jurisprudence), *Maqaasid Shariah* (Sciences of Objectives of Shariah), *Miraath* (Sciences of Inheritance), *Sultaniyaah wa Qadaa'a* (Sciences of Ruling & Judging), *Taareekh Islamiyaah* (Sciences of Islamic History)

Allah ta'aala says:

*"And it is not (proper) for the believers to go out to fight (Jihaad) all together. Of every troop of them, a party only should go forth, that they (who are left behind) may get instructions in the Deen, and that they may warn their people when they return to them, so that they may beware (of evil)"*¹²

¹² (Quran 9:122)



SECTION: THE USOOL (FOUNDATIONS) IN THE MANHAJ OF TALAB AL-ILIM

1. TAT-HEER AL-QALB (PURIFY THE HEART)

It is upon the Talib Al-Ilm to purify his heart from all the defections which impede knowledge from entering it, for indeed pure knowledge only enters and remains in the pure heart which is free of diseases like *Kibr* (arrogance), *Hasad* (envy), and *Riyaa* (showing off), etc.

Imaam Sahl Ibn Abdullah Tasturi (283A.H) said:

"It is Haram for light (Al-Ilm) to enter into a heart, whilst present inside it is something which Allah ta'aala hates" ¹³

2. IKHLAS AL-NIYYAH (SINCERITY OF INTENTIONS)

It is upon the Talib Al-Ilm to purify his intentions and make them solely for Allah ta'aala alone, and he must likewise free himself from all forms of *Riyaa* (showing off).

The Prophet (ﷺ) said:

"Actions are (judged) by the motives (Niyyah) behind them, so each man will be rewarded in accordance to what he intended. Thus, he whose Hijrah was to Allah and His Messenger, then his Hijrah is to Allah and His Messenger; but he whose Hijrah was for some worldly thing he might gain, or for a wife he might marry, his migration is to that for which he migrated." ¹⁴

¹³ Mari'fah Li Ibn Rajab

¹⁴ Sahih Bukhari wa Sahih Muslim)



FORMS OF NIYYAH (INTENTION) IN SEEKING SHARI KNOWLEDGE:

- (a). *Ridwaan Allah* – To gain the pleasure of Allah ta’aala by obeying His command to seek Ilim
- (b). *Ibaadah Alaa Basirah* – To Worship Allah based upon correct Ilim
- (c). *Raf’u Al-Jahal* – To remove ignorance from yourself, family, community, and society
- (d). *Hifdhu al-Deen* – To preserve the Ilim of the Deen by learning it, memorizing it, defending it and spreading it
- (e). *Iqaamat al-Deen* – Working to establish the Deen upon yourself, whilst giving Dawah and Tarbiyah to your family, community, and society based upon the correct knowledge of the Deen.

3. AL-ITSI’AANAH (SEEKING AID AND HELP FROM ALLAH)

It is upon the Talib Al-Ilim to understand that he cannot achieve anything from Ilim except by the permission and power of Allah ta’aala alone, so with that in mind, he seeks the aid and support of Allah through constant Dua.

Allah ta’aala says:

“And they will never encompass anything of His Knowledge except that which He wills” ¹⁵

Imaam Makool Ibn Abdullah (112 A.H) used to say when studying:

“Laa Hawla wa Laa Quwwatta Illaa-Billaah (There is no power or ability except from Allah alone)”

¹⁵ (Quran 2:255)



5. TADREEJ FIL ILIM MA ALIM RABBANI (LEARNING IN A GRADUAL & PLANNED WAY WITH A WISE NURTURING SCHOLAR)

It is upon the Talib Al-Ilm to seek Ilm in a gradual and planned way with a *Rabbani* teacher (righteous, nurturing & wise) who is upon the Aqeedah and Manhaj of Ahl Sunnah wal Jamaa'ah, indeed this is the Manhaj of *Tarbiyaah* in learning, as indicated in the Quran and Sunnah, as understood by the Salaf us Salih.

Allah ta'aala says:

"Ask the People of Dhikr (Scholars of Quran) if you do not know" ¹⁶

Allah ta'aala says:

"But rather be Rabbaaniyyoon (wise scholars who cultivate the people) by your teaching them the Book and your studying it" ¹⁷

Imaam Muhammad Ibn Seerin (110 A.H) said:

"Verily this Al-Ilm is part of the Deen, so be cautious and look from who you're taking your Deen from" ¹⁸

Allah ta'aala says:

"And those who disbelieve say: "Why is not the Qur'an revealed to him all at once?" Thus (it is sent down in parts), that We may strengthen your heart thereby. And We have revealed it to you gradually, in stages. (It was revealed to the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم in 23 years.)" ¹⁹

¹⁶ (Quran 16:43)

¹⁷ (Quran 3:79)

¹⁸ Sahih Muslim

¹⁹ (Quran 25: 32)



Imaam Shihab az-Zuhri (124 A.H) said:

"And do not try to gather knowledge (on a subject) all at once, for indeed whosoever aims to acquire knowledge all at once, it will leave him all at once. Rather knowledge should be studied bit by bit, over the passage of days and nights" ²⁰

6. HIFZ (MEMORIZATION OF KNOWLEDGE)

It is upon the Talib Al-Ilm to exert strong efforts in memorizing and acquainting himself with key *Mutoon* (texts) in each of the important *Uloom* (Shariah sciences),

Allah ta'aalaa says:

"Nay, but they, the clear Ayaat are preserved in the hearts of those who have been given knowledge" ²¹

And some of the Uleema would say:

"Every type of Ilm which a person cannot enter the toilet with, is not considered or defined as knowledge" ²²

And the Ulamaa have divided the *Uloom* (Shariah Sciences) into two categories:

ULOOM ASLIYYAAH (FOUNDATIONAL SCIENCES):

- *Tafsir Al-Quran* (Explanation of Quran)
- *Sharh Al-Hadith* (Explanation of Hadith)
- *Aqeedah* (Islamic Beliefs)
- *Fiqh Al-Ibaadat* wa Mu'amalaat wa Al-Akhlaq wa Adaab

(Jurisprudence in Worship, Transactions, Morals and Manners)

²⁰ Jaami Bayaan al-Ilmi wa Fadlihi

²¹ (Quran 29: 49)

²² Jamaa Akhlaq Rawi



ULOOM MUSA'ADAH (SUPPORTING SCIENCES):

- *Uloom Al-Quran* (Sciences of Quran),
- *Uloom wa Mustalah Hadeeth* (Sciences of Hadith)
- *Usool Al-Fiqh* (Foundations of Islamic Jurisprudence)
- *Qawaa'id Fiqhiyyaah* (Principles of Islamic Jurisprudence)
- *Lughah Al-Arabiyyah wal Nahw* (Arabic Language & Grammar)
- *Seerah Nabawiyyah* (Biography of the Prophet)
- *Taareekh Islamiyyah* (General Islamic history)

7. TAQWA AND AMAAL BI AL-ILIM

It is upon the Talib Al-Ilm to be mindful and fearful of disobeying Allah ta'aalaa, for indeed *Taqwa* is from the greatest means of being blessed by Allah with Ilm, and *Ma'aasee* (Sins) are the greatest means by which the servant loses the blessing of Al-Ilm.

Allah ta'aala says:

“So have Taqwaa of Allah; and Allah will teach you” ²³

Imaam Malik Ibn Anas (179 A.H) said to Imam al-Shaafi (204 A.H):

“Verily, I see Allah has placed light in your heart, so do not extinguish it with the darkness of disobedience” ²⁴

²³ (Quran 2:282)

²⁴ Jawabi Kaafi



8. IJTihad WA SABR Fi TALIB AL-ILIM (STRIVING HARD & BEING PATIENT IN SEEKING KNOWLEDGE)

It is upon the Talib Al-Ilm to exert the upmost efforts in order to seek and gain *Shar'i* knowledge. He must also cultivate himself and have consistency and patience upon the difficult path of seeking knowledge, for indeed deep knowledge is not gained by ease of the body and relaxation!

Allah ta'aala says:

"As for those who strive hard in Us (Our Cause), We will surely guide them to Our Paths (i.e. Allah's religion - Islamic Monotheism). And verily, Allah is with the Muhsineen (good doers)" ²⁵

Allah ta'aala says:

"And (remember) when Musa (Moses) said to his boy-servant: "I will not give up (travelling) until I reach the junction of the two seas or (until) I spend years and years in travelling." ...Then they found one of Our slaves, on whom We had bestowed mercy from Us, and whom We had taught knowledge from Us. Musa (Moses) said to him (Khidr): "May I follow you so that you teach me something of that knowledge (guidance and true path) which you have been taught (by Allah)?" He (Khidr) said: "Verily you will not be able to have patience with me! "And how can you have patience about a thing which you know not?" Musa (Moses) said: "If Allah wills, you will find me patient, and I will not disobey you in aught" " ²⁶

²⁵ (Quran 29:69)

²⁶ (Quran 18:60-69)



9. KITAABA WA IJTIHAAD FI TAQREER AL-ILIM (STRIVING HARD TO WRITE DOWN, REVIEW/REVISE AL-ILIM)

It is upon the Talib Al-Ilm to exert his utmost efforts in trying to preserve Al-Ilm that he learns by writing it down and by reviewing it regularly, lest he not forget it.

The Prophet () said:

“Preserve knowledge by writing it down” ²⁷

Abdullah Ibn Abbas (68 A.H) said:

“Indeed man has been called Insaan because he was entrusted with a covenant, but he forgot” ²⁸

²⁷ Mu’jaam al-Kabir’ - at-Tabarani

²⁸ ‘Mu’jaam al-Saghir’ - at-Tabarani